

TEST YOUR NO TRUMP PLAY

by Larry Cohen

Contract: 2NT by South

Opening Lead: C 2

NORTH

S KQJ10

H 10 2

D A10653

C 72

SOUTH

S 873

H J6

D QJ92

C AKQ10

Step One: How many tricks do we have?

Five. The club lead provides four tricks in addition to our Diamond Ace.

Step Two: How might we get more tricks?

Spades or diamonds. If we knock out the S Ace, we develop three extra tricks. If we win a diamond finesse, we can take five diamond tricks in total (four extra tricks). If the diamond finesse loses, we will still have developed three diamond tricks.

Step Three: What is our stopper situation?

The clubs are quadruple stopped and we were fortunate to get a club lead. However, hearts are unstopped. The defense can take at least five heart tricks if they get the lead.

Step Four: What is the plan?

Since good defenders will find the heart shift (they can tell from trick one that the future in clubs is bleak), playing spades won't work. We would lose the S Ace and enough heart tricks to set us in 2NT.

Instead, we should take the 50-50 diamond finesse. What if the contract were 1NT? Now, it would be right to knock out the S Ace.

Why? Because hearts are likely five-four (if they were six-three, the opponents might have bid or led them). Knocking out the S Ace would give the defense only six tricks (the spade and five hearts).

Risking the diamond finesse (albeit for potential overtricks), would risk a 1NT contract. If the diamond finesse were to lose, the contract would be down.

MORE FROM LARRY COHEN on NO TRUMP PLAY
Look at this fun 7NT deal!

NORTH

S 3
H AK
D A
C A98765432

SOUTH

S AKQ
H QJ109
D KQJ1098
C -----

In 7NT, South receives the S J lead. How should he play? He has lots of tricks (14 total), but entry troubles. The D Ace is blocking the suit. After winning the spade, declarer can cross to dummy, but will never get back to his hand.

The solution is a fancy and fun double-unblocking play. Declarer's first three tricks are taken by the S AKQ. On the high spades, he discards dummy's H AK. Then, he can take four heart tricks and throw dummy's D Ace.

This allows him to win all 13 tricks in his hand. (He could also throw the D Ace on the spades and then discard the blocking hearts on the diamonds). As you might suspect, this is a made-up deal, so don't hold your breath waiting to try this in real life.

TAKEOUT DOUBLES for BEGINNERS

By FRED GITELMAN

**World Champion and Founder of BBO (www.bridgebase.com)
excerpted from BIL magazine (Beginner Intermediate Lounge on BBO)**

Your RHO opens the bidding with 1 of a suit . It is your turn to bid. You can either Pass, make a bid of your own or Double. If you Double you are not saying you want to penalize the opponents at the 1 - level. You are making what is known as a Takeout Double - one of the most important tools in competitive bidding. This article is an introduction to the Takeout Double.

Before we go any further , let us define a Takeout Double (TOD from now on) and the messages it conveys to partner.

First it says : "Partner, I have at least close to an opening hand ".

Second it says, "I am short in the opponents suit but have support for all three of the other suits ".

As you will see, this rule does not always apply. Sometimes it is correct to make a Takeout Double on a very strong hand without support for all the other suits, but this is good rule to start with.

Third it says, "Unless the main feature in your hand is length and strength in the opponent's suit , you must TAKE (us) OUT of defending this contract (that is, you must bid something other than pass) "

Typically, the responder to a TOD bids his longest suit. Since the TO Doubler has shown support for all unbid suits, there rates to be a good trump fit in responder's longest suit.

An IDEAL TOD has a shape of 4441, with the singleton in the suit opened by the opponent

e.g. RHO opens 1C You hold:

S AQxx
H K10xx
D AJxx
C x

or

S KQJx
H Jxxx
H AQ10x
C x

Bid Double with both hands. Partner will almost always bid one of the other 3 suits. You have excellent trump support regardless of the suit partner picks.

In some cases it is preferable to make a TOD on hands with less than 12 HCPs, sometimes with as few as 10. In these cases. You must have ideal distribution (4441 or 5440) as well as good texture. Good texture means a wealth of intermediate cards such as 8s, 9s, and 10s, which have no HCP value but which have great value in play.

For example:

**S K1098
H A98x
D K108
C x**

Most experts would make a TOD of 1C with this 10 point hand

From Barbara: Count dummy points because you are likely going to be dummy. With 4 card support for all unbid suits here, your singleton is worth 3 points. To make a TOD, you need 13 or more points including distribution.

The TOD applies no matter which suit is opened. Should that suit be Spades it simply means that partner will be obliged (in most cases) to bid at the 2 level.

RHO opens 1 Spade and you hold

**S x
H QJxx
D AKQx
C Q10xx
or
S void
H KQxx
D AQxx
C K9xxx**

Make a takeout Double on both of these hands

RHO opens 1 Diamond and you hold:

**S AJ9x
H Qxx
D KJx
C KQ9**

or

**S K8x
H AQ
D AJxx
C Q10xx**

Here you should overcall 1NT, just as if RHO had passed and it was your turn to bid. Do not Double, even with such a fine opening hand, as you do not hold adequate support for the unbid suits. When overcalling in Notrump, it is preferable, although not mandatory, to hold more than just a single stopper in the suit that was opened. The point range that I recommend for a 1NT overcall is a "good 15 to 18" HCP.

When your hand is too strong to overcall 1NT

(Once again, in these examples RHO opens 1 Diamond)

S A10
H KJx
D AJxx
C KQJx

or

S Kxx
H A10x
D KQxx
C AKJ

First Double, ostensibly for takeout, but after partner responds, rebid in Notrump at the cheapest level. These hands are too good to overcall 1 Notrump (15 to 18 HCP) in the direct position, so start with Double. Your Notrump rebid then shows 19-21 HCP - which is a hand too good for an immediate 1NT overcall.

Say RHO opens 1 heart and you hold

S AQ9xx
H x
D A108x
C Kxx

Overcall 1 Spade; do not make a Takeout Double. The reason for this is that otherwise you may 'lose' the Spade suit. It is always preferable to find a major suit fit.

If you Double on this hand, partner may respond with a 2 Club bid, and your hand is not good enough to first Double and then bid spades. You would have to pass 2 Clubs. 2 Clubs might be a reasonable contract, but Spades may easily be a better trump suit for you - you might even be able to make 4 spades.

If you start with a TOD on the above hand , your Spades could be lost forever. I strongly recommend overcalling a 5 card major vs making a TOD on most hands with support for all unbid suits.

However, if the Spades and Diamonds were switched ...

S A108x
H x
D AQ9xx
C Kxx

Now is the right time to make a TOD of 1 heart. Yes, if partner responds 2 Clubs, you could lose the Diamond suit.

Losing a minor suit, however, is not nearly as important as losing a major suit.

Also, if you do overcall 2 Diamonds, you may well lose a spade fit.

2 diamonds could be passed out. Even if the opponents bid again, your hand is not strong enough to bid a second time.

RHO opens 1 Heart and you hold:

S AQxx
H x
D Kx
C KJ10xxx

Bid 2 Clubs. It would be wrong to Double , because partner may respond 2 Diamonds .
For instance , give partner :

S xx
H QJxx
D 10xxxx
C xx

With that hand, he must bid 2 diamonds and the partnership is already too high. After a 2 Club overcall he can simply pass. It is true that overcalling 2 Clubs may result in the Spade fit being lost, but your 6 card Club suit gives you some added safety.

Adding another Ace to the good hand above however,

S AQxx
H x
D Kx
C AKJ10xx

Makes the TOD a better choice. With 17 HCP and an excellent Club suit your hand is too strong for a 2 Club overcall after 1 Heart by RHO. Partner would not expect this strong a hand for an overcall - he would pass 2 clubs on many hands in which a game contract could be made. Start with the TOD . If partner bids Spades or Notrump, you can raise to game. If partner bids Diamonds you can bid your Clubs, suggesting this sort of hand.

Message from Barbara: An overcall at the 1 level promises 8-17 points including distribution. An overcall at the 2 level promises close to an opening bid up to 17 points. So if you have more points than that, then you need to double first and then bid your suit, known as "The Big Overcall" or "The Big Double."

The above example is another case of when a TOD does not have to contain good support for all unbid suits.

Here are some more examples:

RHO opens 1 Club and you hold

S AKJ10xx

H Ax

D KQ9x

C x

or

S Kxx

H KQJ10XX

D AQJx

C void

First Double, then at your next turn bid your suit. This sequence shows both a powerful hand (17 or more points including distribution) as well as one with a single suit of its own that needs very little trump support.

To summarize, there are three types of hands in which it is correct to make a Takeout Double of an Opponent's opening bid:

- 1. A hand with good support for all the other suits and at least 13+ points including distribution.**
- 2. A balanced hand that is too strong for a 1NT (15 + to 18) overcall**
- 3. A hand with a long suit that is too strong for a simple overcall in your suit. Most partnerships play that a simple overcall is unlikely to be stronger than about 17 points including distribution.**

CREATING AN ILLUSION - by Robert Griffiths

32
A83
75
QJ10984

K10654
Q7
A942
K2

J97
J10542
KJ108
7

W N E S
1S 2C 2S 3N
Pass

AQ8
K96
Q63
A653

This hand shows a variation on a swindle that has been written up many times before. But it's a fun swindle when it works.

W opened with 1S and N overcalled with a very light 2C. E raised to 2S and S, expecting a bit more from his partner, jumped to 3NT. This contract should have no chance with 4 D losers and a C loser but S found a way to fool his opponents into letting him make his game.

W led the S 5 and S looked over the dummy, thinking about the fine mess he was in. The good news was that if the C K was in the E hand, S could scoot off with 10 tricks before the opponents knew what hit them. But S knew that it was more likely that the opening bidder had the C K in which case the opponents could scoot off with one Club and at least 4 Diamonds before S knew what hit him.

S pictured what would happen if he did the normal thing and won the S Q at Trick 1 and the crossed to dummy to take the likely-to-lose C finesse. W would see all of the C tricks available in the dummy and would switch to Diamonds, his only hope to find tricks.

S found a way to discourage a Diamond switch. He won Trick one with the S Ace. Then he crossed to the H Ace and took the losing Club finesse. This sequence convinced W that E had the missing S Queen. At Trick 4, W led a low Spade to his partner's known Queen, expecting a lot of S tricks.

Instead, to W's surprise, S won his S Q and made it home with two Spades, two Hearts and five Clubs. If W had seen through his subterfuge and switched to a D, the defence could have taken 9 tricks for down 5.

Of course, if it turned out that E had the C King all along, S would have wasted a trick with this manoeuvre.

Sometimes trickery is justified!